

General opinion of Pandora

The Urth list — 5 messages, 5 voices, 19 May 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3262>

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Endy9 — 19 May 2002, 00:47

I just made my second attempt to read Pandora by Holly Hollander. The first time I got about 3 chapters into the book before I decided this book is not for me. Now about 10-11 years later I decided to pick it up and try again. I got about 6 chapters into it this time before being thoroughly convinced, I don't like it.

My first thought on this book was that GW was playing with his fans. I could imagine a scene with his publisher where he made a bet that he could write any drivel and his fans would not only buy it, but find some deep hidden meaning in it that made it better than the literal words on the page.

I then searched the Urth archives and found opinions that he was trying to imitate Catcher in the Rye. By coincidence I finally decided to read Catcher for the first time a few weeks back. I didn't like Catcher for the same reasons I don't like Pandora. The cutesy-ness of a rebellious, cynical teen talking in teen code, with stream of consciousness disorienting style only works for a short work. In a longer work, at least this reader, gets very tired of it.

Both books showed signs of brilliance with interesting sequences of action or dialogue but would kill the momentum of those moments by slipping back into teen verbiage singsong nonsense.

Did people on this mailing list generally like or dislike this one? Haven't seen too many opinions (unless I missed them) when searching the archives.

Dennis/Endy

<http://home.attbi.com/~phleblori1/indy9/index.htm>

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Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation. Your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are. (John Wooden)

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Nigel Price — 19 May 2002, 04:51 · follows Endy9

For what it's worth, I really like "Pandora". I think it's charming.

I like it as a detective story, I like it as a mildly satirical Nancy Drew pastiche, and I like it as a gently almost-magical evocation of the area where GW actually lives. I like the way that GW changes the names of local towns and suburbs without really changing them, sometimes slightly altering them, sometimes, as in "Dawn" for "Aurora", substituting their meaning for their name, as in the "Soldier" books. I like the subtle intrusion of a shaping mythological framework, where the meaning of the myth is itself a detective story, with the different versions and interpretations of the myth competing in the manner of possible suspects in a murder mystery. I like the way that the romance between Holly and Aladin is done. His house and his household always seem slightly magical to me. His way of life is in stark contrast to Holly's privileged existence and her discovery of an alternative mode of living right in the middle of the area where she lives has always seemed to me somehow analogous to discovering the world of

Faerie in the woods at the bottom of your garden.

On a personal and highly subjective note, "Pandora" always strikes me as a book written by a man who has and loves his daughters. For sentimental reasons, that appeals to me.

I make no claims for this as a great book, but I do find it a very likeable one. It's a light book, and light books are difficult to do well. I think that GW has written this well.

Nigel

Michael Andre-Driussi — 19 May 2002, 04:50 · follows Nigel Price

Endy didn't like PANDORA then, and he doesn't like PANDORA now.

That's fine.

OTOH, PANDORA is in excellent company with CATCHER IN THE RYE!

For myself, I like CATCHER better than PANDORA, but I like CATCHER a lot and I like PANDORA okay. Haven't read it in years. As it happens, I know from email that Henry Kaiser reread it just a few weeks ago, and while he feels it is Wolfe-lite (perhaps the lightest of them all), I don't recall any complaints. That it is "Wolfe-lite" is not argued in my recollection.

Endy wrote:

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Then again, that's nasty. I wish you hadn't written it.

Personally, I think of PANDORA as being in a category with PEACE and THE DEVIL IN A FOREST: Gene Wolfe making an honest attempt at something outside strict f/sf genre, in this case the mystery genre. PEACE was mainstream and DEVIL was young adult (people were recently complaining about PEACE being tagged as a "first" novel, but it was a first "non-genre" novel, and from that vantage point you can see how marketing would remove the qualifiers, with the mainstream hopes and prayers that a big hit would mean that Gene Wolfe would never have to go back to writing that escapist drivel known as "genre" again).

Endy wrote:

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What does it matter what =anybody= else says? You hate it. That is your opinion. Tried and tested. Do you want people to tell you that you are an idiot? Do you want people to brow-beat you into reading it again until you like it? Do you want people to tell you that you are a genius for "seeing through all the drivel," for being the brave fellow who says that the emperor has no clothes?

Or is it the whole consensus reading thing: where are you in the "herd" . . . middle, fringe, outside?

=mantis=

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Lexicon Urthus out of print!

<http://www.siriusfiction.com/>

Roy C. Lackey — 19 May 2002, 06:38 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Endys wrote:

Did people on this mailing list generally like or dislike this one?

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FWIW, I liked it. I happen to have read it for the third or fourth time just a couple of months ago. I never thought to compare it to CATCHER, but then I haven't read CATCHER since the mid-'60s. I don't think GW intended PANDORA as his version of CATCHER; rather, he just wanted to write something different, and did it. It wasn't intended as great _Art_. For the rest; what Nigel said.

-Roy

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 20 May 2002, 16:19 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Dennis/Endy wrote:

Did people on this mailing list generally like or dislike this one?

Can't speak for "people" but for me ... well, I have read it once, about four years ago. I remember enjoying it. I remember almost nothing else about it; it's on my "to reread pile," but doesn't move up very fast. So my basic after-the-fact description of the book would be "amiable, but forgettable." Wolfe lite? Definitely; books like 5HC, the various Suns, and PEACE, while I still haven't fully absorbed any of them, have on first and all subsequent readings left very strong, if scattered, impressions on my soggy brain.

Happy monday,